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TO ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

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INFO RUESBKC/ATO ASIA IMMEDIATE 1748

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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 1963

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
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¶1. The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa), and recommends against all travel to North Kivu province. This replaces the Travel Warning dated July 23, 2008 to note the deterioration in the security situation in North Kivu.

¶2. Conditions within certain regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly in the east, remain dangerous. Official personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa are restricted from travel to North Kivu unless the travel is for official business and has been specifically authorized by the Embassy. On October 29, 2008, all U.S. Government personnel who had been present in the city of Goma relocated temporarily to the Rwandan town of Gisenyi, directly across the border. American citizens should avoid travel to Goma and surrounding areas, and those who are there are urged to depart. Fighting between armed rebels, Congolese military forces, and U.N. peacekeeping troops has increased in the province of North Kivu and continues in the provinces of South Kivu, Orientale, northern Katanga, and sporadically in Bas Congo. Armed groups as well as active duty and demobilized Congolese troops in parts of the country are known to pillage, carjack, and steal vehicles, kill extra-judicially, rape, kidnap, and carry out military or paramilitary operations. Government soldiers, as well as rebel fighters expected to be demobilized as a result of ongoing peace processes, remain a security concern. Travelers are frequently detained and questioned by poorly disciplined security forces at numerous roadblocks and border crossings throughout the country.

¶3. Travelers to the DRC frequently experience difficulties at the airport and other ports of entry,

such as temporary detention, passport confiscation, and demands by immigration and security personnel for unofficial "special fees." Visas are not available at ports of entry. All resident foreigners, including Americans, are required to register at the office of the Direction General de Migration (DGM) in the commune of their place of residence. Border closures of 24-48 hour durations can occur without much advance notice.

¶4. Enforcement of aviation safety standards in the DRC is uneven, with frequent incidents and crashes. The U.S. Embassy has prohibited official travel by U.S. government employees and contractors on all DRC-owned and operated commercial airlines due to safety and maintenance concerns. International flights on foreign-owned and -operated carriers are not affected by this notice.

¶5. American citizens should avoid all public demonstrations and areas where crowds have gathered, exercise caution, and closely monitor local and international news from reliable sources. Radio Okapi broadcasts in French on 103.5 FM at 0700, 0800, 1200, and 1800 as well as "flash" updates throughout the day. English-language news can be found on BBC at 92.7 FM. In times of emergency, the Belgian Embassy operates a French-language radio broadcast system at FM 98.8. Changes in security conditions may occasionally restrict the travel of U.S. Mission personnel.

¶6. Public Health concerns also pose a hazard to U.S. citizen travelers due to outbreaks of deadly viruses and other diseases, which can occur without warning and often are not rapidly reported by local health authorities. Information on personal protection for

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international travelers, including children, can be found at <http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel>.

¶7. U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in the DRC despite this Travel Warning are strongly urged to register with the Embassy in Kinshasa or through the State Department's travel registration website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at 310 Avenue des Aviateurs; the Consular Section entrance is located on Avenue Dumi, opposite Saint Anne's Residence. The Embassy's 24-hour phone number is 243-81-225-5872; callers within DRC should dial 081-225-5872. All Embassy telephone numbers are cellular phones as landlines are unreliable. The Embassy website is <http://kinshasa.usembassy.gov>.

¶8. U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Worldwide Caution, both located on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Up-to-date information on safety and security is available toll-free at 1-888-407-4747 from within the United States and Canada, or at regular toll rates at 1-202-501-4444 for callers outside the United States and Canada, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

¶9. Minimize considered.
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